Press release

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Birthday gift of million pound contract

18 March 2002

The Met Office is celebrating the first birthday of NETA by landing a contract worth more than £1million to provide the National Grid with forecasting services until 2005.

The deal - which fulfils meteorological requirements for both the power giants' UK and overseas interests - was confirmed last week at National Grid Company.

A new generation of sophisticated high-tech graphics has been created by the Met Office to work with the National Grid's state-of-the-art monitoring system to ensure seamless integration.

Met Office Utilities Sales Manager Nicolas Roberts said: "This is a significant deal for the Met Office as it shows that when the UK's leading energy transmission company wants the best and most trusted information it comes to the Met Office.

"The National Grid's forecasting of load is crucial to the whole industry and indeed the country, so the decision to work with us for the next three years has not been taken lightly. We are delighted."

The deal comes as the Met Office reports a huge take up of new services by generating firms since NETA went live last March.

The Met Office has responded to NETA with a new portfolio of forecast services, which are drawn from its 16 energy sites around the UK. Met Office models are run four times a day with supply customers deciding which combination of model runs best suits their needs. All data are quality checked by specialist forecasters before despatch to customers.

Said Roberts: "There is a feeling in the industry that the introduction of NETA has been relatively pain free. There are some issues concerning the generators, but by and large it is reported as having been a great success.

"What it has also done is to give forecasting a new importance for energy firms. They now have to forward plan with more accuracy if they are to avoid higher costs of buying in extra energy rather than to simply dip into the now defunct electricity pool. In line with this we have increased what we can offer to energy firms and added more flexibility, which has been tremendously popular. This allows us to tailor forecasting packages for our clients, and demand for our services has risen significantly over the last 12 months."

Current Met Office clients who are using specialist NETA services include London Electricity, Scottish Power and TXU. A new client is Swedish energy firm Vattenfall AB. Another client - Seeboard - was well prepared for the introduction of NETA having embraced forecasting as part of its business planning a while ago.

Seeboard forecasting manager Dave Parker said: " Weather is a key influencer on day-to-day changes in energy demand and consequently the provision of accurate weather forecasts is essential to maintain a competitive position in the market.

"NETA rewards certainty so there have been a few issues for generators using uncertain energy sources such as wind. But, on the whole, companies with good risk management and planning processes have been able to effectively manage the transition to the new NETA world."

For more information on Met Office services to energy companies visit www.metoffice.com/energy

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